



VINCENT C. GRAY
MAYOR

January 12, 2012

The Honorable Jonathan B. Jarvis
Director
National Park Service
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Director Jarvis:

On December 16, 2011, I wrote you requesting reimbursement from the National Park Service for the expenses incurred by the District of Columbia required to ensure a safe and peaceful protest by the two Occupy DC groups. I would appreciate a response.

In addition, I write today to bring to your attention the attached report by the District of Columbia Department of Health (DOH) raising serious concerns about the health and safety of the Occupy DC protestors – most acutely those at the McPherson Square site. The most serious of these concerns include dangerous rat infestation as well as the serious potential for communicable disease, hypothermia, and food borne illness.

Dr. Mohammed Akhter, Director of DOH, has conducted inspections of both camp sites and has informed me that the conditions at McPherson Square are particularly a threat to the health and safety of both protestors and District residents. These risks are attributed to improper disposal and containment of trash and human waste. This has led, in part, to an increase in rodents at the site. Rodents have been seen not only around the site, but inside tents and even in the food preparation area.

In addition, hypothermia is an issue the District faces every winter. In 2010, eleven people died in the District due to hypothermia. If the weather were to become colder we could be faced with a tragedy of unprecedented levels. In addition, the DOH report notes that the makeshift heaters some protestors are using to attempt to heat tents have created the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Since both Occupy DC locations are under federal control, it falls to you to take immediate steps to remedy this dangerous situation. At a minimum, the Occupy DC sites at McPherson Square and Freedom Plaza must be consolidated at Freedom Plaza to allow for elimination of the rat infestation, clean up, and restoration of McPherson Square. Steps to ensure that Freedom Plaza continues to be a safe place must also be taken, including regular safety and compliance checks.

Further, I am concerned that the letter I sent you on December 16th remains unanswered. District residents should not be forced to cover the costs of the Occupy DC protests when the decisions that led to these on-going camp sites were made entirely by the National Park Service.

Thank you for your prompt attention to these serious issues.

Regards,


Vincent C. Gray
Mayor

CC: Allen Lew, City Administrator
Cathy Lanier, Chief of Police

Enclosure